

TEACHER'S BOOK

THE RANSOM OF RED CHIEF AND OTHER STORIES

O. Henry



StandFo
graded reader

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THE RANSOM OF RED CHIEF AND OTHER STORIES

O. Henry (1862–1910) was the pen name of William Sydney Porter. He was born and brought up in North Carolina. When he was twenty, he moved to Texas, where he had a number of different jobs, but also started to work as a journalist and to write short stories. He became a full time writer in 1894. In 1897 he was sent to prison for three years for stealing money from a bank, and he wrote fourteen stories while he was in prison. He used pen names because he didn't want people to know that he was a prisoner.

After his release from prison, O. Henry went to live in New York, where he wrote over three hundred stories. He often wrote a story a week, and many of them were published in magazines. He became a very popular writer in the last years of his life.



Look at the pictures in the book and read the back cover.
Check the correct answers.

1. All the stories in this book happen in...
 - a. France in the middle of the 1700s. ☐
 - b. The United States in the late 1800s. ☒
 - c. Australia in the year 2000. ☐
 - d. Brazil in the early 1900s. ☐
2. Jim and Della are...
 - a. very good friends. ☐
 - b. a brother and sister. ☐
 - c. a young husband and wife. ☒
 - d. two workers in the same business. ☐
3. During the cold winter months, Soapy wants to...
 - a. go south to a sunny country. ☐
 - b. visit his old family home. ☐
 - c. walk through the snowy streets. ☐
 - d. stay in a warm jail. ☒
4. Bill Driscoll and his friend Sam hope to make money by...
 - a. taking a young boy away from his rich father. ☒
 - b. building a hotel in the country. ☐
 - c. selling a lot of cheap medicine. ☐
 - d. stealing money from a bank. ☐

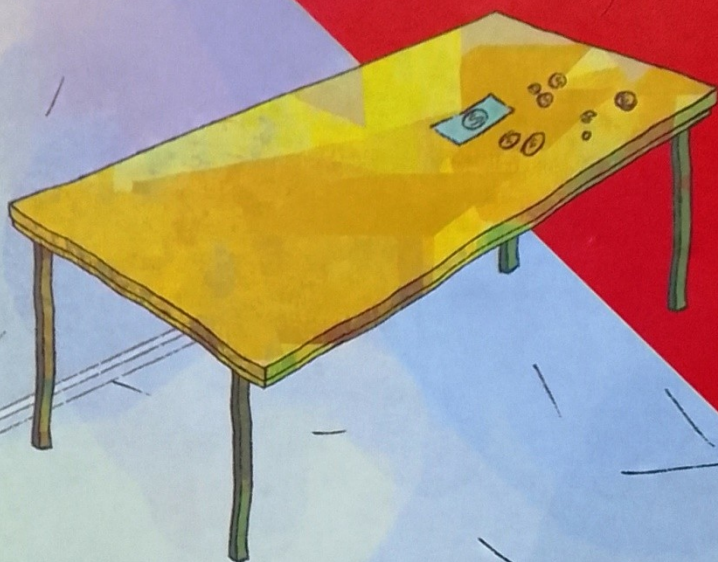


Each of the three stories in this book ends in a surprising way.
How, do you think? Finish these sentences. **Personal answers.**

1. Jim wants to buy things for Della's hair and she wants to buy something for Jim's watch, but...
2. Soapy does many things to get into trouble with the police, but...
3. Bill and Sam want money for bringing a young boy back home to his father, but...

1

The Christmas Gifts



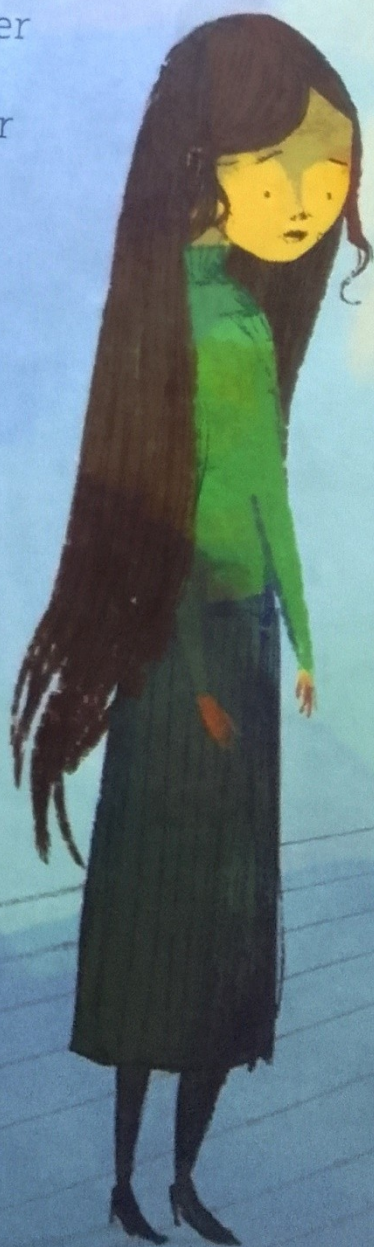
One dollar, eighty-seven cents. That was all. Della saved money every day when she went shopping. She hated to think of it. She always asked to pay less in the food stores, and from the vegetable man and the meat man in the market. She felt bad doing this. But that way she saved. She checked the money again three times. One dollar, eighty-seven cents. And it was Christmas tomorrow.

Della sat on the couch and cried noisily. Things weren't easy. She lived with her husband James D. Young in a small apartment in New York. It came with furniture, and it cost \$8 a week.

Last year James Dillingham Young took home \$30 from work each week. Now his pay was only \$20. But every time he came back from work and went upstairs to his apartment, Della, his wife took him in her arms and called him "Jim". That was good.

Della stopped crying. She looked unhappily out the window at a gray cat on a gray wall in the gray backyard. Tomorrow was Christmas Day and she had only \$1.87 to spend on a gift for Jim. \$20 a week wasn't much. It was difficult to save from that. Food and other things were so expensive. How could she buy something fine for her husband?

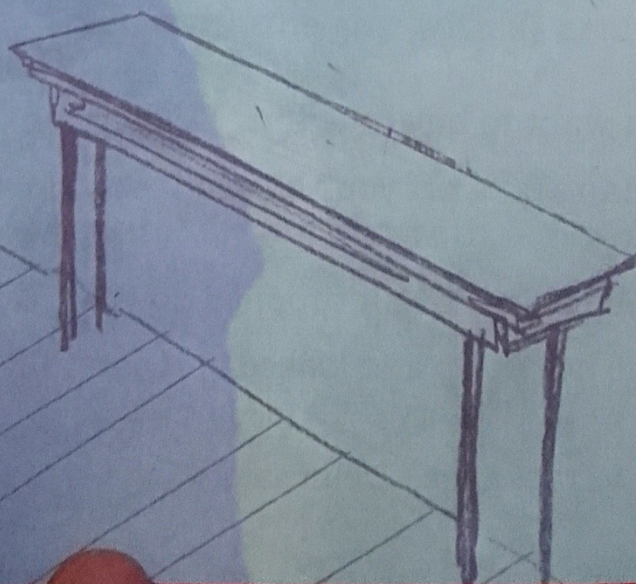
There was a narrow mirror on the wall next to the window. Della moved away from the window, stood in front of this mirror, and looked into it. Her eyes were bright, but her face went white after twenty seconds. She quickly undid her long, brown hair and looked again into the mirror.



Jim and Della were proud of two things more than anything. One of these was a gold pocket watch – once Jim's grandfather's, then his father's, and now his. He loved to take this watch out of his pocket and tell the time on it. The other thing was Della's beautiful hair. She had a lovely, long, brown river of it.

Della quickly put her long hair up again. Then she stopped and cried. After that, she put on her old brown jacket and hat. With bright eyes she hurried out the front door of the apartment and downstairs into the street.

She stopped after a while in front of an old brown building and read the advertisement by the door. It said, "Madame Sofronie. Hair is my business. 2nd floor. Walk up." Della ran upstairs and into a large room. She spoke to the tall, unfriendly, white woman inside.





"Do you want to buy my hair?" Della asked.

"I buy hair. Take off your hat and let's look at it."

The brown river of hair dropped down.

Madame held it up and looked at it carefully. She knew her job well. "Twenty dollars," she said.

"Give it to me quick," Della said.



The next two hours went past in an exciting way. Della looked in all the stores for a Christmas gift for Jim. She found it at last. It was a beautiful gold watch chain. She visited many different stores that afternoon, and in all the stores she found no other chain so wonderful. It was the only one, and it felt special for that. It was just right for Jim. Della knew that when she first saw the beautiful chain. It could go very well with his pocket watch.

She paid twenty-one dollars for the chain. Then she hurried home, happy with the gift, with 87 cents in her pocket.

When Della arrived at the apartment, she took her curling irons out, and started working on her hair. She wanted to be beautiful for Jim. But with really short hair it was a difficult job. After forty minutes, she looked in the mirror. A young boy looked back at her.

"Oh no!" she said. "It's the hair of a cheap theater dancer. But what could I do with one dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

At 7 o'clock the coffee was ready. She just needed to cook the meat for supper. The pan was waiting on the back of the stove, hot and ready.

Jim was never late. Della had the watch chain in front of her as she sat at the table. It was next to the front door of the apartment. Jim always came in through that door.

Then she heard her husband. He came through the entrance from the street and started walking upstairs. As she heard his heavy steps on the stairs, her face went white. "Is my new hair OK for him now?" she thought. "Oh, I hope so."

The door opened. Jim came in and closed the door. He was thin and he wasn't smiling. Poor man. He was only twenty-two years old, and already he had a family and needed to work for two. He wore an old coat and his hands were cold and white.





Jim stopped just inside the door and looked at Della. What was he thinking? She couldn't tell. He wasn't angry. It wasn't surprise in his eyes. He just gave her a long, strange look. Della felt worried.

She got up and ran to her husband.

"Jim dear," she said. "Don't look at me in that way. I cut my hair and I sold it because I wanted to buy you a Christmas gift. Short hair soon gets longer. Don't be angry. Say 'Happy Christmas' and let's forget it. I bought you a wonderful gift."

"You cut your hair!" Jim said slowly. Why couldn't he understand?

"Yes, I cut it and sold it," Della said. "What's the matter? Don't you love me now? It's still me, only without my hair, you know."

Jim looked about the room. "Where did your hair go?" he asked. What was the matter with him?

"It's not here," Della explained. "I sold it all for you. Look, Jim, it's the night before Christmas. There's meat for supper. I can cook it. Then we can eat."

Jim woke up from his strange dream. He went over and took Della in his arms. Then he took a package from his coat pocket and put it on the table.

"Look, Della," he said. "I don't love you less because your hair is shorter now. Why did I look at you so strangely when I first saw it? Open that package and maybe you can understand."

Quickly Della pulled the paper off the package. At first she shouted out happily, but then she began to cry. Jim went to her and put his arms round her again.



She had two beautiful hair combs in front of her. They were expensive, she knew. She remembered seeing them in the window of a store on Broadway. She wanted them badly then, but she had no hope of ever having them. And now they were hers. They were just the right color for her beautiful long brown hair – only her hair was short now! She couldn't wear them until it was longer.

Just then, Della jumped up and shouted, "Oh!"



Jim needed to see his beautiful gift. She held out the chain to him. "Isn't it wonderful, dear? I looked for it all over town. You can check the time nicely now. Give me your watch and let's put it on the chain."

But Jim didn't give his watch to her. He sat down on the couch, put his hands behind his head and smiled.

"Della," he said. "Let's put away our Christmas gifts for a while. We can't do anything with them just now! I really wanted to buy you those combs. But because I didn't have the money for them, I sold my watch. So now maybe you can cook the meat and let's have supper."

Long ago, three wise men brought their gifts to baby Jesus in Bethlehem. They were the first people to give Christmas gifts. Their gifts were wise and expensive, I'm sure. So why am I telling you a story about a poor young husband and his wife in their little apartment in New York? They unwisely give away their two most important things for love. But of all the Christmas gift givers, these two are the wisest. They are the true wise men.



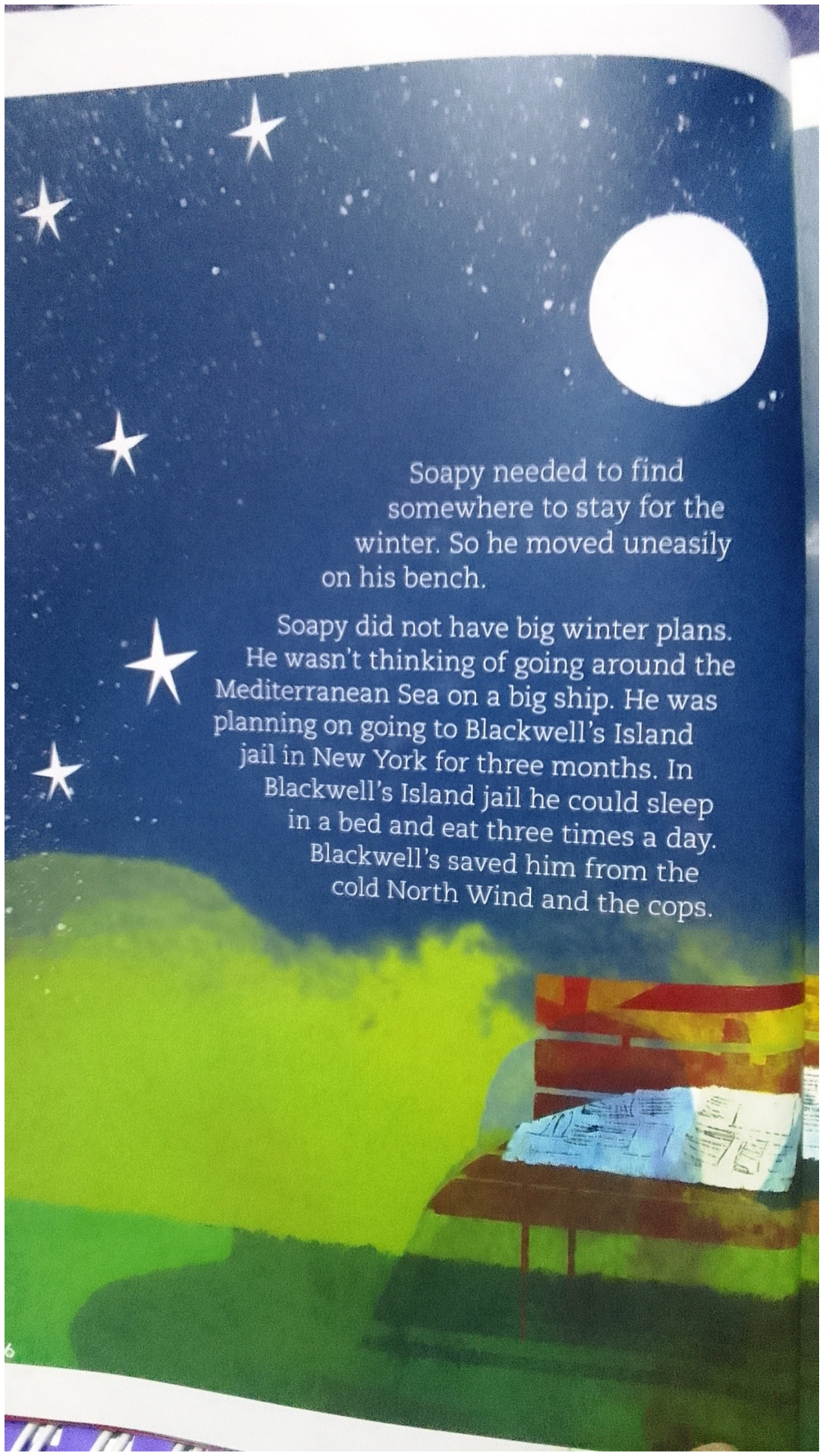
Soapy's Winter Vacation

Soapy moved uneasily. He was sitting on his bench in Madison Square Park. When birds fly to warmer countries, when women without expensive warm coats are suddenly very nice to their husbands, when Soapy moves uneasily on his bench in the park, it's nearly winter.

A dead leaf fell on him. Winter tells people when he's coming. When the streets become windy and cold, Winter's on his way. The people in the park must get ready.




Winter's
on his way.



Soapy needed to find
somewhere to stay for the
winter. So he moved uneasily
on his bench.

Soapy did not have big winter plans.
He wasn't thinking of going around the
Mediterranean Sea on a big ship. He was
planning on going to Blackwell's Island
jail in New York for three months. In
Blackwell's Island jail he could sleep
in a bed and eat three times a day.
Blackwell's saved him from the
cold North Wind and the cops.

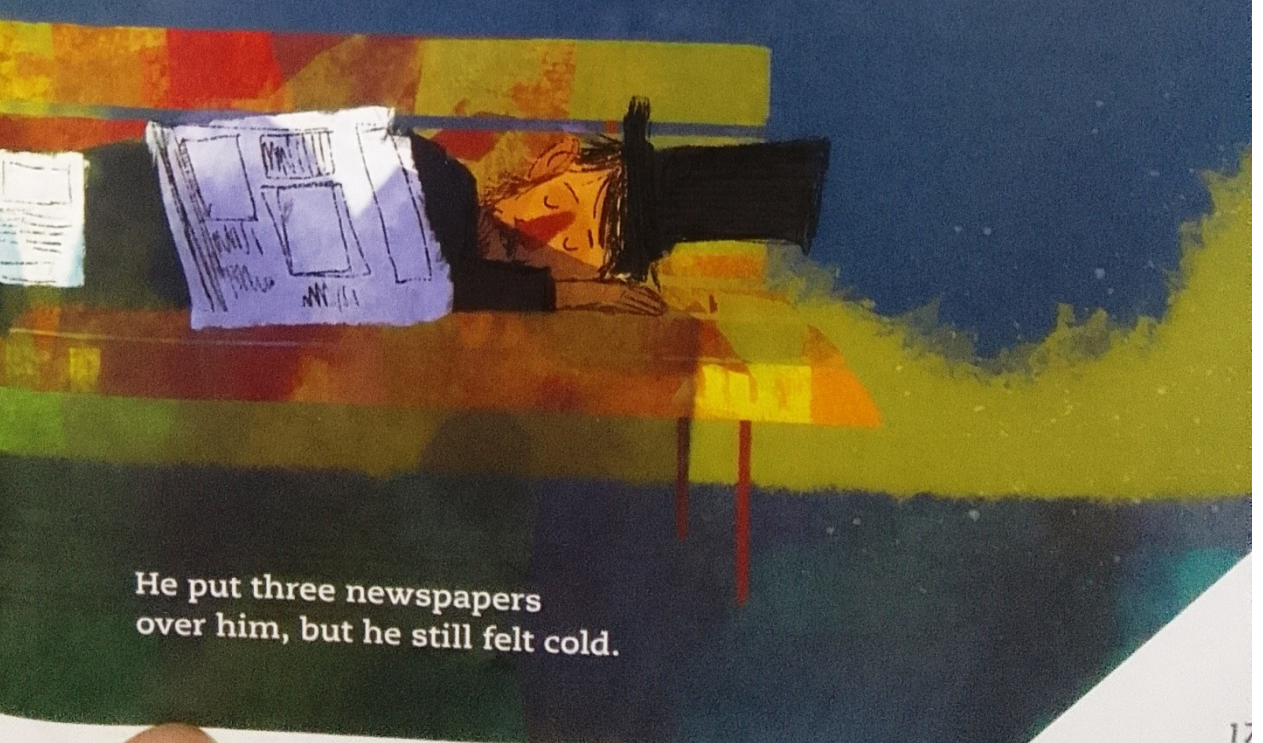




The jail was Soapy's usual home in winter now. He began going there years ago. Rich New Yorkers bought tickets for the south of France or for the beaches in Florida every winter. Soapy took his winter vacation on Blackwell's Island at that time. And now that time was here. The night before, when he was sleeping on his bench in Madison Square, he put three Sunday newspapers over him, but he still felt cold. Today he couldn't stop thinking about the Island.

Soapy didn't really like charity. A jail was better than a charity center, he felt. There were many charity centers in New York. They helped poor people and people with no homes. They gave street people food and a bed for the night.

But Soapy was proud. He didn't like charity gifts because they were never really free. You didn't pay money for charity food or a charity bed, but you paid in other ways. You needed to take a shower, or answer many private questions, before you could get them. Soapy preferred jail. They didn't ask you many questions there.



He put three newspapers
over him, but he still felt cold.



So Soapy wanted to go to the Island. He began thinking about how to get there. There were many ways to do it. He could eat a big dinner at an expensive restaurant. Then, when they brought the check, he could say, "I have no money. I can't pay." After that, they always call the cops, and in the end he goes to the Island.

Soapy left his bench. He walked out of the park and across the wide, open road near it. Broadway and Fifth Avenue meet there.

Soapy walked up Broadway. He stopped outside a really expensive restaurant. The finest people met here at night in their best clothes to have the tastiest food and drinks.

The top half of Soapy looked good, he knew. His face was clean. He wore a good coat, and his necktie (a gift from a woman helper at a charity dinner on Thanksgiving Day) was nice and new.



Soapy began to dream of a tasty duck
with a bottle of fine red wine.

"I must sit down quickly at a table in that restaurant.
Then I can have a nice dinner," he thought. "When
the waiter sees my top half above the table, he
won't question a thing."

Soapy began to dream of a tasty
duck with a bottle of fine red
wine. He also dreamed of soft
French cheese, and a cup of strong
black coffee and a cigar. "Only one
dollar for the cigar," he thought.

"I don't want them to be too
angry with me." In this
way he could travel to
the Island full of duck
meat and happy.

Soapy pulled his Thanksgiving necktie straight and opened the restaurant door. But when he put his foot inside, the waiter saw his old pants and the holes in his shoes at once. Strong hands carried Soapy back out into the street quickly and quietly. One lucky duck didn't meet its death that night.

Soapy walked away from the restaurant and left Broadway. He needed to find another way to get to the Island.

At the corner of Sixth Avenue, electric lights lit a store window brightly. You could see the expensive clothes in it from far away. Soapy took a heavy rock from the road and sent it noisily through the glass.

A cop hurried around the corner. Soapy stood with his hands in his pockets. He smiled.

He sent it noisily
though the glass.



"Who broke that window?" the cop asked.

"I did," Soapy laughed. He thought happily of the warm inside of the jail.

But the cop did not believe Soapy. Window breakers don't stay and talk to the police. They run away.

Then the cop saw a man half a block down the street. The man was running for a taxi. So the cop ran after him.

"Oh, no! My plans went wrong for the second time," Soapy thought unhappily. He was losing hope now. Why was he still out of jail? He walked along the street with slow, heavy steps.

On the other side of the street there was another restaurant. It was not expensive. Nobody looked at his old pants and shoes. Nobody sent him away at the door.



"Who broke that window?"

Soapy sat down at a table. He asked for the most expensive dish on the menu and a number of tasty cakes.

When he finished eating, he called the waiter, "Listen, I don't have any money. So get a cop – and make it fast. I don't like waiting."

"Oh, don't you?" the waiter answered in a buttery voice. "Well, I have news for you, jail-bird. No cop for you. And no jail either!"

Two unfeeling waiters dropped Soapy out in the street. He stood up and brushed his clothes clean with his hands. Going to jail was an impossible dream, he felt. The Island was far away. A cop in front of a store two doors away laughed and walked off.

Soapy walked five blocks. He stopped in the bright streets near Times Square – home of the newest New York theaters. Here, women wore expensive jackets over long evening dresses and men wore heavy coats over fine evening clothes. It was getting colder and Soapy was getting worried.

He was still as free as a bird, and he didn't like it.



Then he saw another cop in front of a big, modern theater. A new plan came into his head. "Hmm, They send people to jail for drinking heavily and then making too much noise in the street," he thought.

Soapy began singing loudly, dancing noisily, and shouting at the top of his voice.

Out of the corner of his eye, Soapy watched the cop. The man in the blue coat looked at him.

Soapy thought of the cop's heavy hand on his arm. The Island jail came nearer.

Two unfeeling waiters dropped Soapy on his left ear out in the street.

But then the cop in front of the theater looked away. With his back to Soapy, he spoke to another man next to him in the street.

"That noisy man is a Yale student," the cop said. "He's happy because the Harvard team just lost the yearly game against Yale. They told us at the police station earlier 'Leave the Yale boys alone. They're no trouble.'"

Soapy heard this and stopped dancing. Could he never get into trouble with the police? The way to the Island was so difficult this year. He closed the front of his thin coat against the freezing wind and walked away.



Soon he saw a man in fine clothes inside a cigar store. He was a rich old man and he was lighting a cigar inside the store. His expensive umbrella was standing by the entrance. Soapy went through the door, took the umbrella in his hand, and started slowly walking away. The man with the cigar hurried after him.

"That's my umbrella!" the cigar man said angrily.

"Oh, is it?" Soapy said. "Then call the police. Look, there's a cop on that corner. I took your umbrella. Tell him."

When they got near the cop, the umbrella man started walking more slowly. Soapy began to walk more slowly, too. "I'm going to be unlucky again," he thought.

The cop looked at both men strangely.

"Well, maybe I'm wrong," the umbrella man said. "Is it your umbrella, do you think? I'm sorry. I took it from a restaurant this morning. It was an accident. So maybe it is yours."

"Of course it's mine," Soapy said angrily.

The man left without the umbrella. The cop hurried to help a blond woman in a black winter coat. She was leaving one of the finest music theaters and wanted to cross the street in front of traffic. The traffic was two blocks away.



"That noisy man
is a Yale student."

Soapy walked east down a narrow street. Some men were working on the road here, and he put the umbrella in a deep hole in the middle of the street. He spoke angrily against the police. Why weren't they doing their job?

Soon he arrived at one of the dark, quiet avenues in the east. He started walking down it to Madison Square. He stopped on a very quiet corner. An old church stood there.

Soft yellow light lit the church windows. Organ music came from the building. The organist was practicing for next Sunday.



In the dark sky the stars were bright. There were few people around. Little birds sat around the top of the church and sang sleepily.

Soapy remembered a church in the country. He listened to the music and remembered his mother, friends, a flower garden, great hopes, fine plans, healthy dreams, and clean clothes.

Then he thought about things now: living alone on the city streets with dead hopes, bad plans, unhealthy dreams, and dirty clothes. "Where did it all go wrong?" he thought. "I must change. I'm not too old."

The organ music sounded. Soapy's head was full of a young man's dreams.

"A man in the clothes business once wanted to give me a job as a driver," he thought. "I can ask him for that job tomorrow and become somebody important. I can—"

Soapy felt a hand on his arm. He looked around into the wide face of a cop.

"What are you doing here?" the man in the blue coat asked.

"Nothing," said Soapy.

"Then come along with me," the cop said.

The next morning they sent Soapy to the Island for three months.

The Ransom of Red Chief



My partner Bill Driscoll and I were in Alabama when we first thought to kidnap someone. It was a big error. But we didn't learn that until later.

We were visiting a country town there – Summit was its name. And its people were as healthy and happy as any country people.

At that time, Bill and I had six hundred dollars between us. We had a “get-rich-quick” house-building plan for Western Illinois in our heads, but we needed two thousand dollars more before we could start working on it. We sat outside our hotel and talked about a kidnap.

“Loving your children is usual in country towns,” we said. “So a kidnap plan could do better here than in a big city.”

We sat outside our hotel
and talked about
a kidnap.



City newspapers send their writers out to get people talking when there's a kidnap. That's bad for kidnapers. But in the town of Summit the only dangers were some country cops, a few puzzled old police dogs, and some angry letters to the *Summit Weekly News*. That was good for us.

We chose the boy for our kidnap carefully. He was the only son of an important man in Summit – Ebenezer Dorset, a rich banker. People borrowed money from him when they wanted to buy new houses. When they couldn't pay him back, his bank took their homes away from them. Then he sold the houses and took the money. He had a good business.

The child was ten years old, and had bright red hair. "Old Ebenezer can easily pay a ransom of two thousand dollars for his son," we said.

Just over three kilometers from Summit there was a little mountain. It had trees all over it. At the back of the mountain there was a cave. We left our food and drink there. We borrowed a buggy from the little town of Poplar five kilometers away. One evening we drove this buggy past old Dorset's house in Summit. The boy was playing out front. He was throwing rocks at a small cat in the street.

"Hey, boy! Would you like some chocolates and a nice ride?" Bill asked.

The child hit Bill's eye with a small rock.

"Dorset must pay us five hundred dollars more for that," Bill said. Then he got down from the buggy.

"Would you like some chocolates and a nice ride?"



That boy fought like an angry red animal. But in the end we got him in the bottom of the buggy and drove away. We took him to the cave and I hid the horses between the trees. When it was dark, I took the buggy back to Poplar and walked back to our mountain. When I arrived, Bill was putting plasters over the cuts on his face.

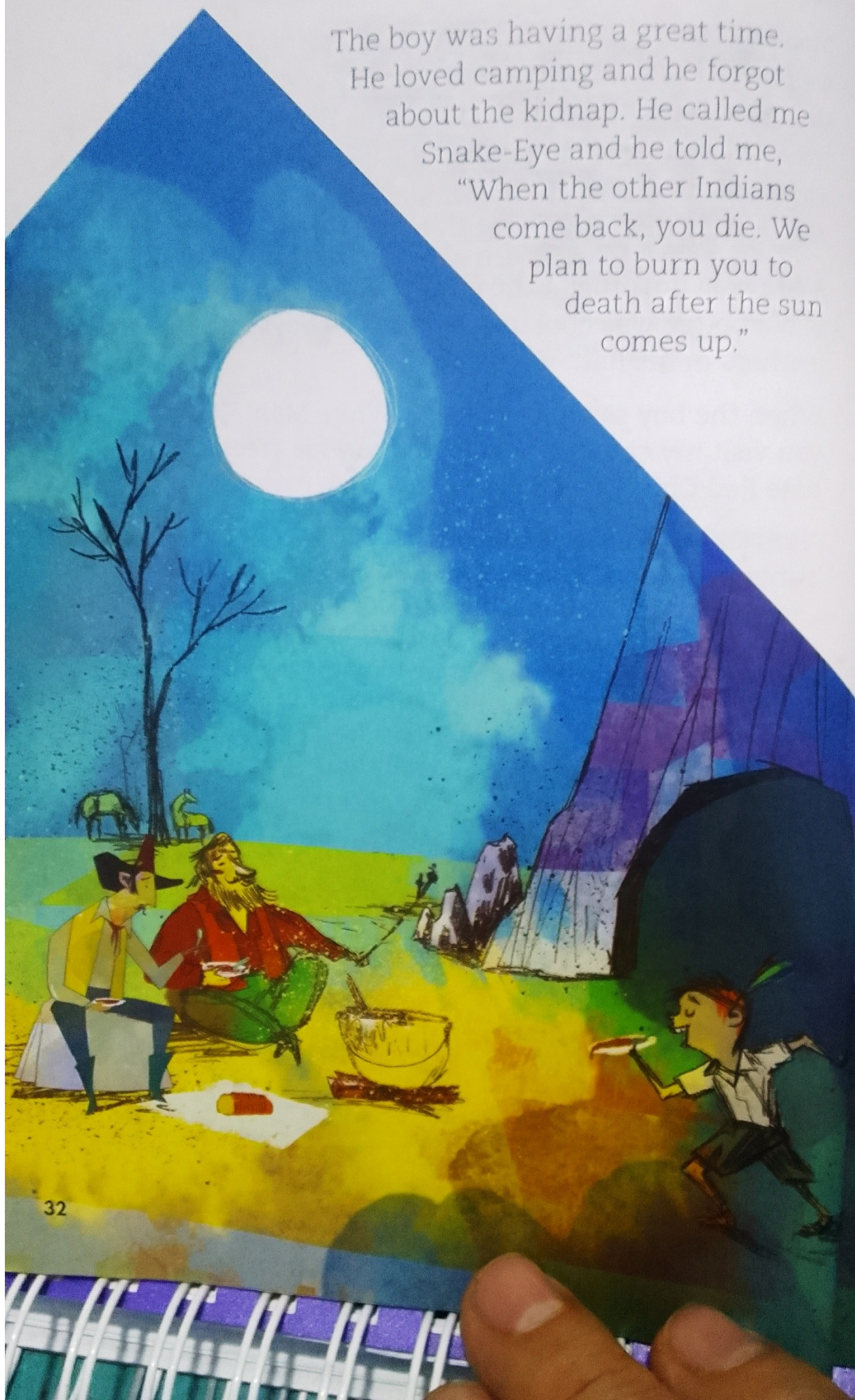
A fire was burning at the entrance to the cave. A pan of hot coffee was cooking on this. The boy, with two feathers in his hair, was watching.

When the boy saw me, he said, "White Man! Why do you visit my camp? The men of the wide green country hate Red Chief."

"He's OK now," Bill said. He pulled up the legs of his pants and looked at his purple ankles. "We're playing at American Indians," he explained. "I'm old Hank, the White Man. Red Chief has me in jail. He's going to scalp me tomorrow before the sun comes up. You know, when that child fights with his feet, it really hurts!"



The boy was having a great time.
He loved camping and he forgot
about the kidnap. He called me
Snake-Eye and he told me,
“When the other Indians
come back, you die. We
plan to burn you to
death after the sun
comes up.”



Then we ate. With his mouth full of bread and meat, the boy said, "I like this a lot. I never camped before. But I had a pet mouse once, and I was nine last birthday. I hate to go to school. Snakes ate sixteen of Jimmy Talbot's aunt's brown-and-white chickens' eggs. Are there real Indians near here? I want more gravy."

I put some more gravy on his plate, and he spoke again.

"Does the moving of the trees make the wind?" Red Chief asked. "We had five young dogs. Why is your nose so red, Hank? My father has a lot of money. Are the stars hot? I fought Ed Walker twice on Saturday and he lost both times. I don't like girls. Why aren't oranges square? Do you have beds for sleeping on in this cave? Amos Murray has six fingers on his left hand. Some birds can talk, but cats and fish can't. How many numbers are in twelve?"

Often he forgot to be "Red Chief". But every few minutes he remembered. Then he went to the cave entrance and looked out for his Indian fighters. Sometimes he gave a great Indian chief's angry shout. "Old Hank" was worried when he did that, I could see. My partner Bill didn't like the boy from the start.

"Red Chief, do you want to go home?" I asked the boy.

"Aw, why?" he said. "Home is boring. I hate to go to school. I like to camp."

"I like to camp."

Then I saw a worried look in Red Chief's eyes.

"You aren't taking me home now, Snake-Eye, are you?" he asked.

"Not today," I said. "We can stay in this cave for now."

"That's great!" he said. "Camping's the best thing ever!"

We went to bed at eleven o'clock. We made our beds on the floor of the cave. Bill and I were on the outside and we put Red Chief's bed between ours. "It's best to have him in the middle. Then he can't run away," we thought.

We couldn't sleep. Again and again, Red Chief jumped up and shouted in our ears, "Did you hear that?" When a tree moved in the wind or a leaf fell outside the cave, he said, "That's thieves. They're coming this way!" After three hours of this, I slept. I had a very bad dream. In it, a thief with red hair kidnapped me and put me in an old jail, high on a mountain.

Early the next morning, while the night sky was changing to orange, Bill started shouting. "Ow! Help! Stop that at once!" he cried.

I jumped up. "What's the matter?" I said. Then I saw, Red Chief was sitting on Bill. One of his hands was holding Bill's hair. In the other hand was our meat knife. With this, Red Chief was cutting Bill's hair from his head – "scalping" him.

I took the knife from the boy, and told him, "Go back to bed." But from that time there was a big change in Bill. He never again slept while the boy was with us.

I went back to sleep for a short time. I got out of bed just before the sun came up and sat with my back against a rock. I remembered Red Chief's words the evening before about burning me to death.



Red Chief was cutting Bill's hair from his head – "scalping" him.

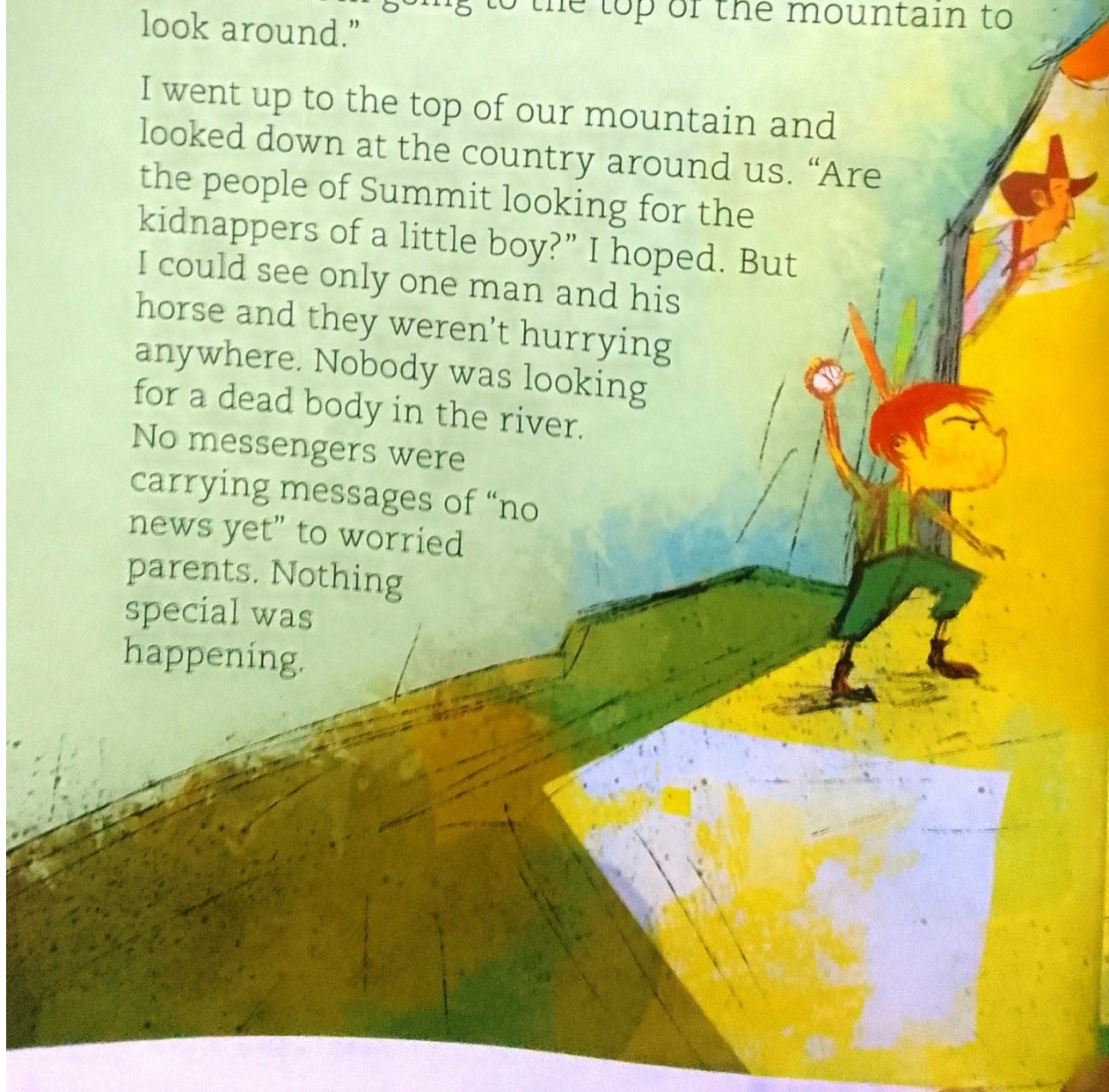
Bill opened his eyes and looked at me. "Why are you up so early, Sam?" he asked.

"My back hurts, and sitting up makes it better," I answered.

"That's not true!" Bill said. "You're thinking about the boy's words last night. He talked about burning you to death after the sun came up. He's trouble and I don't like it. Can we really ask his father for ransom money for taking Red Chief back home?"

"Of course we can!" I said. "Parents love busy, noisy children. Now you and the Chief get up and make breakfast. I'm going to the top of the mountain to look around."

I went up to the top of our mountain and looked down at the country around us. "Are the people of Summit looking for the kidnapers of a little boy?" I hoped. But I could see only one man and his horse and they weren't hurrying anywhere. Nobody was looking for a dead body in the river. No messengers were carrying messages of "no news yet" to worried parents. Nothing special was happening.



"Maybe nobody knows about the kidnap," I thought.

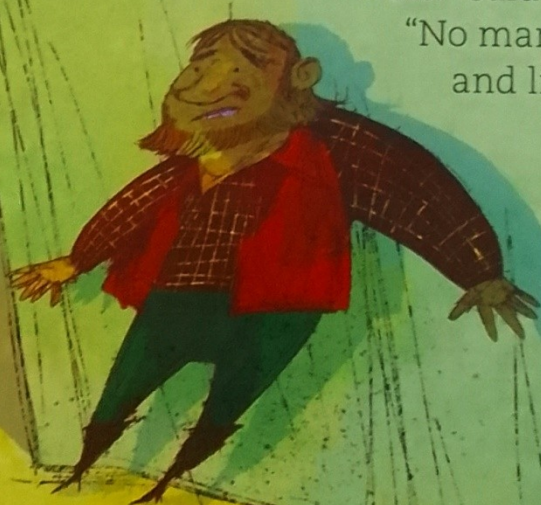
I went down the mountain to breakfast. At the cave, I found Bill with his back to the rock at one side of it. He was looking worriedly at the young boy in front of him.

Red Chief held a big rock in his hand. He told Bill, "Move and I hit you with this!"

"He put a red-hot potato down the back of my shirt," Bill explained. "Then he kicked it to pieces and I hit him around the head. Do you have a gun with you, Sam?"

I took the rock from the boy and stopped them fighting. "Just you wait!" said the child to Bill.

"No man ever hit Red Chief and lived to tell of it."



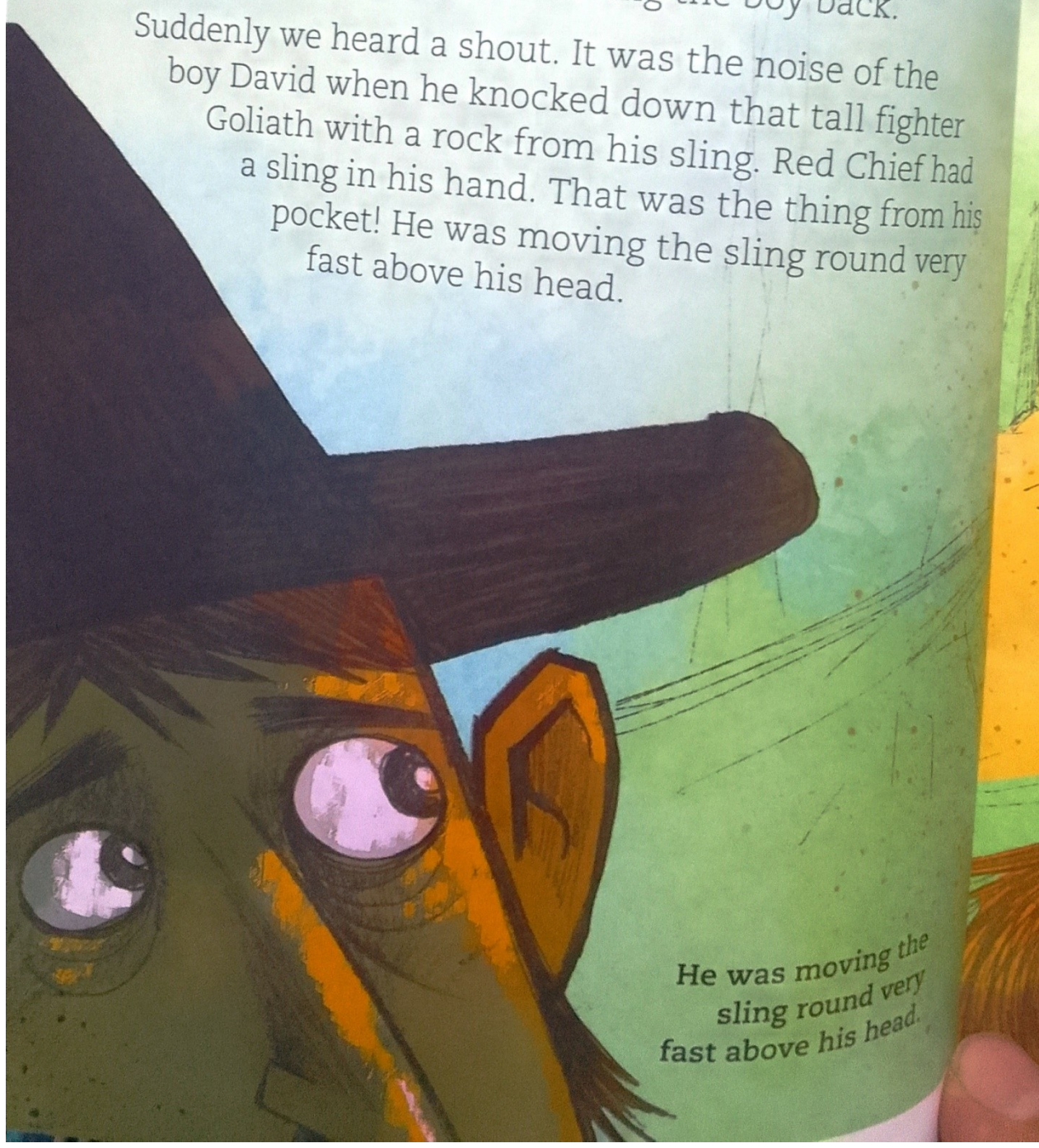
"Move and I hit you with this!"

After breakfast the boy took something from his pocket. He went outside and began playing with it.

"What's he doing?" Bill asked worriedly. "Is he planning to run away, Sam?"

"No," I said. "He doesn't like home. But we need to ask for the ransom. Nobody's looking for a missing boy in Summit. Maybe they don't know about the kidnap yet. Maybe his family is thinking, 'He stayed with Aunt Jane or the people next door for the night.' We must take a message to the boy's father this evening. Let's ask him for two thousand dollars to bring the boy back."

Suddenly we heard a shout. It was the noise of the boy David when he knocked down that tall fighter Goliath with a rock from his sling. Red Chief had a sling in his hand. That was the thing from his pocket! He was moving the sling round very fast above his head.

A stylized illustration of a Native American boy's face, likely Red Chief, with large, wide eyes and a wooden stick or staff held across his face. The background is a mix of green and yellow, suggesting an outdoor setting.

He was moving the sling round very fast above his head.

I quickly moved to one side. Just then, a small rock hit Bill behind his left ear. He made a small sound of surprise, his legs suddenly went soft, and he fell on top of the water pan. It was on the fire because we were heating water to wash the dishes.

I pulled Bill off the fire and put cold water on his head. Thirty minutes later, he opened his eyes and said, "Sam, do you know my favorite person in the Story of the First Christmas?"

"Take it easy," I said. "You're not thinking right."

"My favorite person is Herod, the child-killer," he explained.

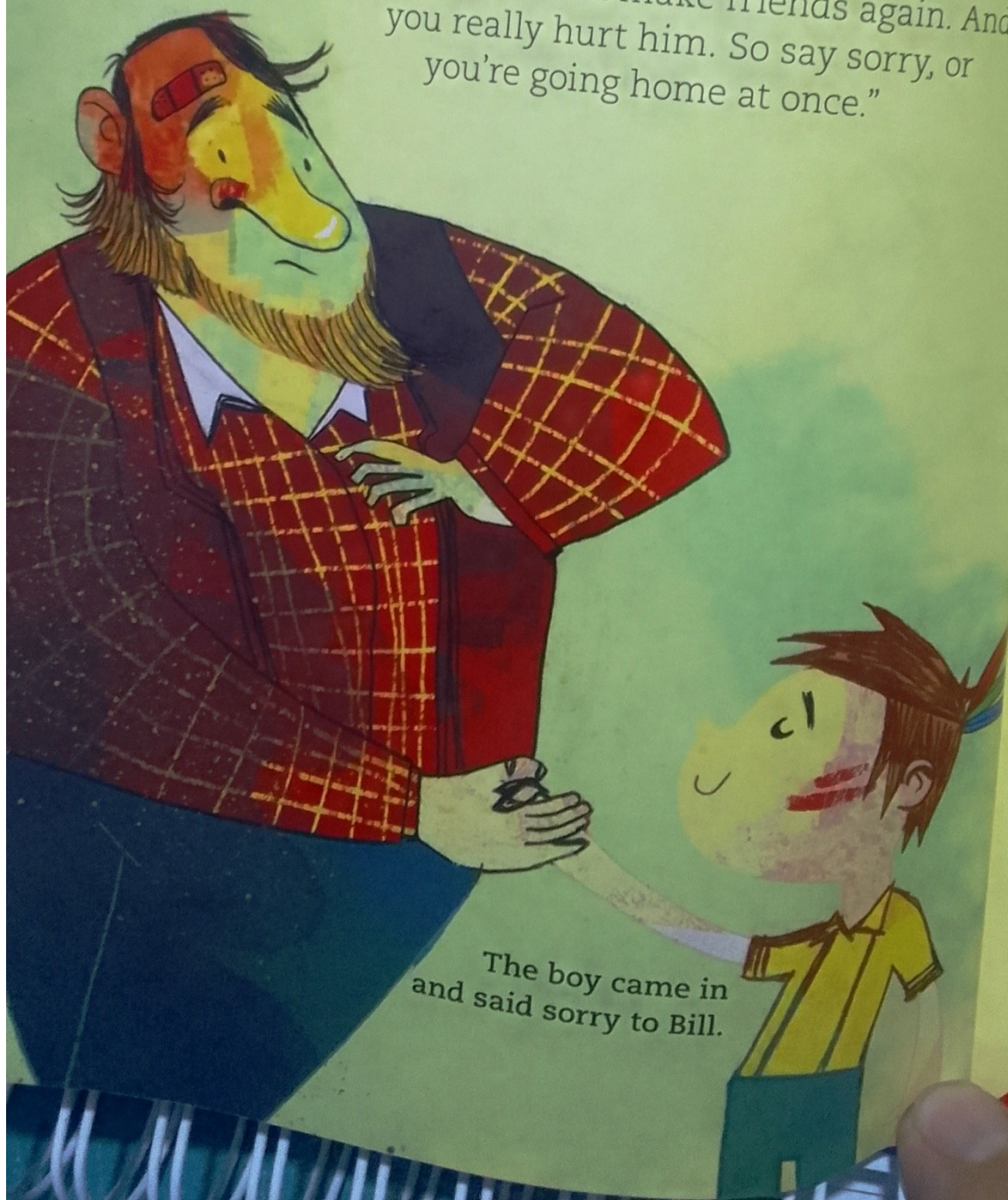
"Don't leave me alone with him again, Sam!"



I went outside, caught the boy and said to him angrily, "Stop being so bad, or I'm taking you home this minute."

"Hey, it was only a game," the child answered. "I didn't mean to hurt old Hank. But why did he hit me? Listen, I can be good, Snake-Eye. Just don't send me home - and please can I play the Black Scout game today?"

"I don't know that game," I said. "You and Mr. Bill can talk about that. You're playing with him today. I'm going away on business. Now, you come inside and make friends again. And you really hurt him. So say sorry, or you're going home at once."



The boy came in
and said sorry to Bill.

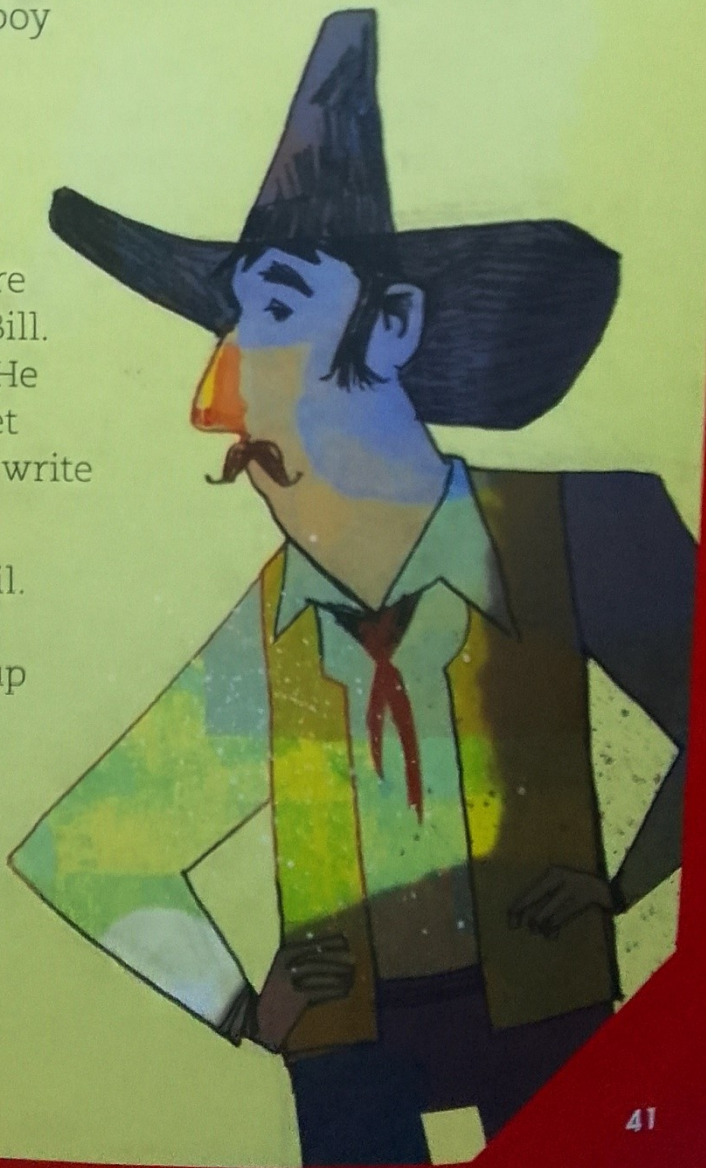
The boy came in and said sorry to Bill.

After that, I took Bill to one side and said, "I'm going to the town of Poplar. I want to hear the news from Summit. What are people saying about the kidnap? We must know. Also we need to send Mr. Dorset a letter about the ransom. How much do we want? How can he pay? We must tell him."

"Sam," Bill said, "I was always on your side: playing card games for money, getting surprise visits from the cops, knocking holes in bank walls, stealing money from trains, traveling through really bad weather. I never got worried before. But that boy is trouble on two legs! He makes me sick. Don't leave me with him for long, Sam!"

"Hey, I'm coming back here this afternoon," I said to Bill. "Just play with the child. He must stay happy and quiet while I'm away. Now let's write the letter to Dorset."

Bill got paper and a pencil. We worked on the letter while Red Chief walked up and down in front of the entrance to the cave. He was looking for White Men.



Bill said, "Sam, I believe in fatherly love, but we're doing business with a banker. And no person in the world could possibly want to give away two thousand dollars for a dangerous 20 kilogram cat with bright red hair. Let's ask for fifteen hundred dollars. Take the other five hundred off my half of the money."

I agreed with Bill's plan, and we wrote the letter:

Mr. Ebenezer Dorset,

We are hiding your boy somewhere far from Summit. You can never find him. But pay us fifteen hundred dollars and you can have him back.

Do you agree? Send your reply at half past eight tonight. Your messenger must travel alone. After he crosses the old river, on the road to the town of Poplar, there are three large trees on the right with a hundred meters between them. Under the third tree, he can find a small gray box. Your messenger must put your answer into this box and then he must go back to Summit at once.

Speak to the police, and you never see your son again. When we get the fifteen hundred dollars, you can have your son back.

This is our final word. Agree to it or it could be our last message to you.

Two Desperate Men

I wrote Dorset's name on the outside and put the letter in my pocket. When I was leaving, the boy said, "Snake-Eye, can I play the Black Scout game while you're away?"

"Of course," I answered. "Mr. Bill can play with you."



Let's ask for fifteen
hundred dollars.

The boy smiled happily.

"Tell me: how does the game work?" I asked him.

"I'm tired of being an Indian. I'm the Black Scout," the child said, "and I must ride to the stockade to say, 'The Indians are coming!'"

"All right," I said. "Mr. Bill can stop those bad Indians with you."

"What must I do?" Bill asked. He looked at the boy worriedly.

"You're the horse," the Black Scout said. "So get on your hands and knees. How can I ride to the stockade without a horse?"

"Relax and stop him from getting bored," I told Bill.

Bill got down on his hands and knees. His eyes were those of a mouse when a snake catches it.

"How far is it to the stockade, boy?" he asked.

"A hundred and fifty kilometers," the Black Scout said. "And we're late. So hurry!"

The Black Scout jumped on Bill's back and he began kicking my partner's sides.

"Come back here, Sam, as soon as you can," said Bill in a worried voice. "Oh, why didn't we make the ransom just a thousand? Say, boy, stop kicking me or you get down and I start hitting you."

I went over to Poplar and I stood in front of the store in the center of the town. When people came to buy things, I questioned them. One old man told me of trouble in Summit. "Ebenezer Dorset's boy is missing. Kidnappers took him, some say."

I didn't need to hear anything more. I went into the store, bought a few small things and put my letter quickly and quietly into the mail-box there. The man in the store told me. "The mail carrier comes here in an hour, and then he takes the mail to Summit."



"Come back here, Sam, as soon as you can."

When I arrived back at the cave, Bill and the boy were not there. I looked for them near the cave for some time and I shouted their names once or twice, but there was no reply. So I sat down outside the cave and waited for answers to all the questions in my head.

After about thirty minutes, Bill stepped out from between the trees. He moved very slowly and his face was tired and red.

The boy was walking as quietly as a scout two meters behind Bill. He had a big smile on his face. Bill stopped, and at the same time the boy stopped two meters behind him.

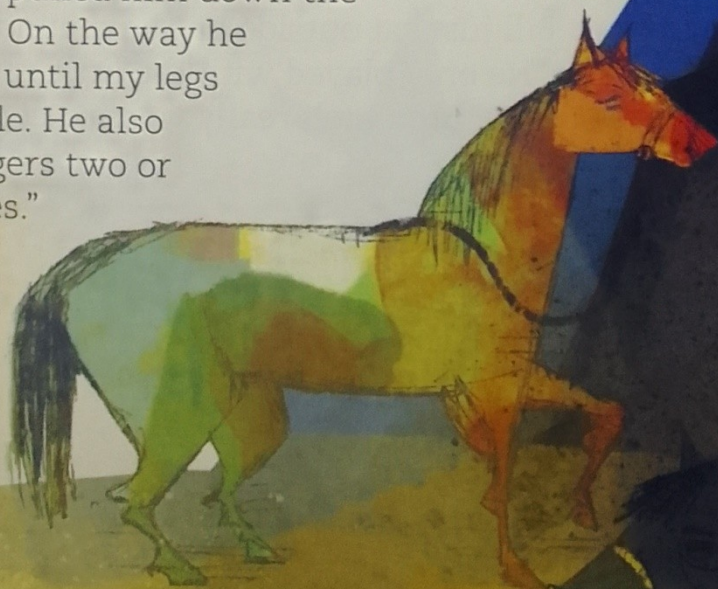
"It was too much for me."



"I'm sorry, Sam. I couldn't help it," Bill began. "You know me. I'm not soft. I like fighting as much as other men, but some things hurt worse than death. I wanted to stay with our plan, but I couldn't. I sent the boy home. It's the end of the kidnap. I really needed to stop."

"What's the matter with you, Bill?" I asked.

"He rode me all of the hundred and fifty kilometers to the stockade," Bill explained. "Then, after we arrived and told the people there about the Indians, I got horse-food. Pah! It tasted so bad. Then for an hour I answered his questions: 'Why is there nothing in a hole? How can a road go both ways? Why is the country green?' I tell you, Sam, it was too much for me. So I took him by the neck of his shirt and I pulled him down the mountain. On the way he kicked me until my legs were purple. He also bit my fingers two or three times."



Bill showed me his bloody hand. A doctor really needed to look at it.

"The boy's at home now, Sam," he said. "I showed him the road to Summit. Then I kicked him two meters along it and started him on his way. We lose the ransom, and I'm sorry for that. But it was either him or me." Bill was shouting, but his red face was happy.

"Bill, is anyone in your family dangerously unhealthy in any way?" I asked.

"No," he replied, puzzled. "Why?"

"Good. Then you can live through the surprise," I said. "Just look behind you!"

Bill looked back and saw the boy. His face suddenly changed color and he fell down heavily at my side.

For an hour Bill just sat outside on the mountain and said nothing. He only played with the little rocks and dry leaves beside him. I felt really worried about him.

Bill looked back
and saw the boy.




After an hour, I said to him, "Look, let's finish the job. We can go visit old Dorset tonight. Let's wait for his answer to our letter. Then we can take the boy to him and get the ransom by twelve o'clock."

Bill gave the boy a small smile. He agreed to be a Russian and to fight against the Japanese when he felt a little stronger.

The country on either side of the road to the town of Poplar had no buildings in it. "When the messenger comes and leaves Dorset's letter, and later the money, in our box," I thought, "a group of watching cops could see everything on that road and around it. Maybe they are planning to catch me when I go and check the box."






I thought of a better plan. I arrived at the road to Poplar early. Before 8.30 that evening, I was already hiding up in the third tree. Nobody could see me there, but I was watching and waiting for Dorset's messenger.

At half past eight, a young man rode up the road on his bike. He got off the bike and found the gray box at the foot of the tree. Then he took a piece of paper from his pocket and put it into the box. After that, he got back on his bike and rode it back along the road to Summit.

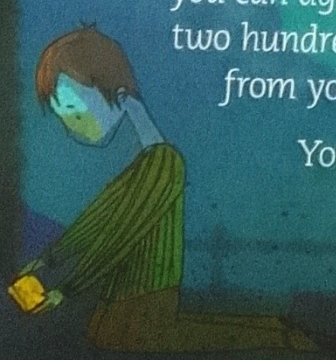


An illustration of a person with a yellow shirt and dark pants climbing a large, dark tree. The background is a mix of green and blue washes.

I waited for the cops up in the tree
for an hour, but none came. So I
climbed down to the road, took Dorset's
letter, and walked back up the mountain to
our cave.

I opened the letter, got near the light, and read
it to Bill. The writing, in blue pen, was small
and thin.

To the two Desperate Men

An illustration of a person with brown hair, wearing a green and yellow striped shirt, kneeling on the ground and looking down at a small yellow object in their hands.

The mail carrier brought your letter to my house
today. You kidnapped my son and are now asking me
for a ransom before you bring him back home. I think
you are asking too much. I have a better plan. Maybe
you can agree to it. You bring Johnny home, pay me
two hundred and fifty dollars, and I can take him
from you.

You should come at night. Johnny is missing,
the neighbors believe. Somebody bringing
him back could be really bad news
for the neighbors. I can't answer for
events when they learn of it.

Yours,

Ebenezer Dorset

"What?" I shouted. "Ebenezer Dorset is a dirty thief! He's asking us to give him money!"

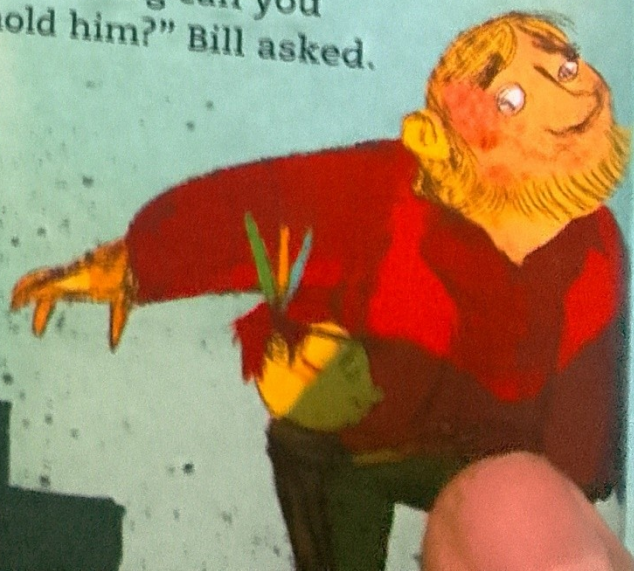
Then I looked at Bill. In his eyes I saw a really desperate look. I never saw that look on the face of any other man or animal.

"What's two hundred and fifty dollars?" said Bill. "We have the money. One more night of Johnny is too much. I'm exhausted. Mr. Dorset's being very generous, I think. Let's agree to his plan before it's too late."

"Well, Bill, I'm also very tired of little Johnny. So let's take him home, pay the ransom, and leave as fast as we can."

We took him that night. He agreed to go because we told him, "Your father bought a great gun and some soft Indian shoes for you. And tomorrow we can shoot some birds."

"How long can you hold him?" Bill asked.



It was the middle of the night when we knocked on Ebenezer's front door. At the time we planned to be taking the money from the box under the tree, Bill was putting two hundred and fifty dollars into Dorset's hand. When the boy learned about the plan, he began crying and put his arms around Bill's leg. It was impossible for my old partner to get away.

Johnny was a large, wet plaster on Bill's leg, but his father pulled him off slowly.

"How long can you hold him?" Bill asked.

"I'm not as strong as I was," Mr. Dorset said. "But you have ten minutes to get away."

"That's great," Bill said. "I can run north across the country and cross into Canada in ten minutes, I'm sure."

It was dark, Bill was fat, and I was a good runner, but I'm telling you this: Bill Driscoll was nearly three kilometers down the road out of Summit when I finally ran past him.



1 Read the story. Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?

1. Della saves \$1.87 from her shopping money over weeks. ☐ T
2. When the story starts, it's the day after Christmas. ☐ F
3. Jim is proud of his watch and Della is proud of her beautiful brown eyes. ☐ F
4. Della has a plan to get more money. ☐ T
5. She sells her hair for thirty dollars. ☐ F
6. She buys a fine watch chain for her husband, Jim. ☐ T
7. Back home, she wants to make her short hair look nice. ☐ T
8. When Jim comes home, he looks at Della happily. ☐ F
9. Jim gives Della two combs for her hair. ☐ T
10. He sells his coat to buy the combs. ☐ F
11. Jim is angry with Della at the end of the story. ☐ F

2 Match the words with the pictures.

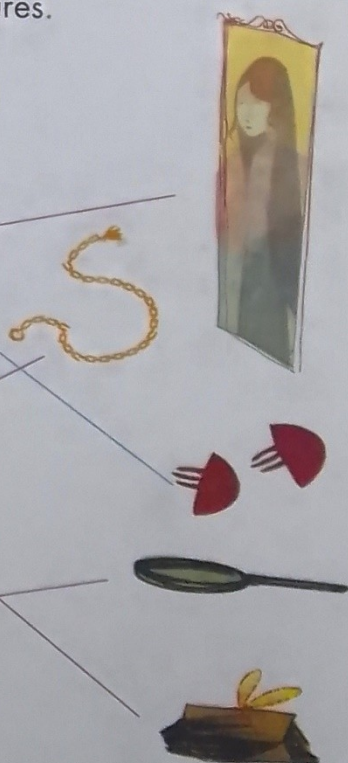
1. combs


2. mirror

3. package


4. chain

5. pan



 Match the beginnings and endings of these sentences.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Jim and Della's apartment... <input type="text" value="c"/> | a. ...but now he gets only \$20. |
| 2. Before Jim got \$30 a week for his work... <input type="text" value="a"/> | b. ...buying and selling hair. |
| 3. Madame Sofronie's job is... <input type="text" value="b"/> | c. ...costs \$8 a week. |
| 4. Della spends nearly all her money... <input type="text" value="g"/> | d. ...gets the supper ready. |
| 5. She makes her short hair... <input type="text" value="f"/> | e. ...is a big surprise for Jim. |
| 6. She makes coffee and... <input type="text" value="d"/> | f. ...look as nice as possible for Jim. |
| 7. Della's short hair... <input type="text" value="e"/> | g. ...on the gold watch chain. |
| 8. Della feels both happy and sad... <input type="text" value="i"/> | h. ...when she learns about him selling his watch. |
| 9. Jim doesn't want Della to feel sad... <input type="text" value="h"/> | i. ...when Jim gives her the combs. |

 What do you think is the message of the story? Check the correct box(es) for you and discuss with a friend. *Personal answers.*

1. Love is more important than money. ☐
2. It's good to think carefully before you buy gifts for other people. ☐
3. Expensive gifts aren't everything. ☐
4. Our plans often need to change when other people have different plans. ☐
5. The three wise men were not really very wise after all. ☐
6. Living without much money isn't easy. ☐

1

Read the story. Put these sentences in the correct order. Number them 1 through 9.

- a. A cop questions Soapy when he is doing nothing wrong in the street. 8
- b. He begins making plans for getting to the jail on Blackwell's Island. 2
- c. He dreams about eating dinner at an expensive restaurant on Broadway 3
- d. Soapy eats in a cheap restaurant and when he can't pay, they put him outside. 4
- e. Soapy gets cold sleeping in Madison Square Park one night. 1
- f. Soapy goes to jail. 9
- g. Soapy listens to some church music and remembers when he was young. 7
- h. Soapy sings and dances in the street but the cops do nothing to stop him. 5
- i. Soapy steals an umbrella from a man in a store. 6

2

Who says or thinks these words? Choose from the people in the box.

~~The cop outside the theater~~
 The waiter at the expensive restaurant
 The waiter in the cheap restaurant
 The cop outside the store

1. "That noisy man is a Yale student."
The cop outside the theater
2. "That man has holes in his shoes and pants."
The waiter at the expensive restaurant
3. "Who broke that window?"
The cop outside the store
4. "No cop for you, and no jail either!"
The waiter in the cheap restaurant



There are 10 words from the story in this word box. Can you find them all?

C	H	U	R	C	H	X	Q	V	L
H	O	M	H	P	R	U	W	E	W
A	V	B	E	N	C	H	L	O	I
R	Z	R	G	L	O	R	G	A	N
I	S	E	M	K	P	R	U	I	T
T	D	L	H	Y	S	X	L	O	E
Y	S	L	F	G	J	D	O	D	R
J	K	A	V	E	N	U	E	X	L
X	G	O	F	R	Y	C	P	R	U
C	S	R	W	Q	U	K	F	O	V
G	C	I	G	A	R	I	S	U	L



Use the words in Activity 1 to complete the sentences.

- Grandfather's cigar comes from Cuba. It's expensive.
- Every Sunday the family next door goes to church.
- Let's go to the park and sit down on a bench under the trees.
- The weather is always so cold in winter here, and I don't like that.
- It was raining earlier. Don't forget to take your umbrella with you!
- To help poor people Bill Gates gives a lot of money to charity.
- Johann Sebastian Bach wrote a lot of organ music.
- Chicken is not as expensive as duck.
- One of the important streets in Manhattan is Fifth Avenue.
- We can call someone from the police a "cop".

1 Read pages 28–41 of the story. Check the correct answers.

1. Where do Bill and Sam first think of kidnapping someone?
 - a. In the country in Western Illinois. ☐
 - b. In the town of Poplar. ☐
 - c. Outside a hotel in Summit. ☒
 - d. In a cave on a mountain in Alabama. ☐
2. Why do Bill and Sam choose the Dorset boy to kidnap?
 - a. He has red hair. ☐
 - b. He is ten years old. ☐
 - c. He is outside his Dad's house. ☐
 - d. His father is rich. ☒
3. Which sentence is *not* true about Red Chief?
 - a. He's a quiet boy. ☒
 - b. He likes playing games and fighting. ☐
 - c. He doesn't like to go to school. ☐
 - d. He doesn't sleep much. ☐
4. What doesn't Red Chief do to Bill?
 - a. Kick his legs and hit him with rocks. ☐
 - b. Put a pan of cold water on his head. ☒
 - c. Begin cutting the hair off his head. ☐
 - d. Put a red-hot potato down the back of his shirt. ☐
5. Why does Sam leave the boy playing "The Black Scout" with Bill?
 - a. He needs to borrow a horse and buggy from a friend. ☐
 - b. He wants to get away from the boy. ☐
 - c. He needs to buy some more food and drink. ☐
 - d. He is going to send a letter to Mr. Dorset to ask for money. ☒

Read pages 42-53 of the story. Are these sentences true (T), false (F), or not mentioned (N)?

1. In Sam and Bill's letter to Mr. Dorset, they ask him for fifteen hundred dollars. ☐ T
2. They write their ransom letter with a purple pen. ☐ F
3. Bill feels happy when the boy gets on his back and rides him. ☐ F
4. Sam spends two hours in town, away from Bill and the boy. ☐ F
5. When Sam returns to the mountain, he finds Bill and the boy in the cave. ☐ F
6. Hiding up in a tall tree, Sam watches Mr. Dorset's messenger leave his reply to the ransom letter. ☐ T
7. The messenger rides his bike very quickly back along the road to Summit. ☐ N
8. In his letter, Mr. Dorset asks for some money to take his son back. ☐ T
9. In the end, Bill and Sam get some ransom money from Mr. Dorset. ☐ F

Complete these sentences. Use the names in the box.

Old Hank Red Chief The Black Scout
Two Desperate Men Poplar Summit

1. Ebenezer and his son, Johnny, live in the country town of Summit.
2. Sam goes and gets a horse and buggy from the small town of Poplar.
3. Johnny Dorset calls Bill Driscoll "Old Hank".
4. Bill and Sam write a letter to Mr. Dorset from "Two Desperate Men".
5. First Johnny Dorset plays at being "Red Chief" the Indian. Later he is "The Black Scout".



Who says this? Who do they say it to? Choose from the people in the box.

An old man in Poplar Bill Mr. Dorset Red Chief Sam

1. "Would you like some chocolates and a nice ride?" Bill says it to Red Chief.
2. "Why do you visit my camp?" Red Chief says it to Sam.
3. "We're playing at American Indians." Bill says it to Sam.
4. "We can stay in this cave for now." Sam says it to Red Chief.
5. "Move and I hit you with this." Red Chief says it to Bill.
6. "You're not thinking right." Sam says it to Bill.
7. "Ebenezer Dorset's boy is missing." An old man in Poplar says it to Sam.
8. "How long can you hold him?" Bill says it to Mr. Dorset.
9. "You have ten minutes to get away." Mr. Dorset says it to Bill and Sam.



What happens when Sam and Bill kidnap Mr. Dorset's son? Complete this summary. Use the words in the box.

bites buggy camping cave chief desperate feathers
 gravy kicks kidnap knees messenger plasters
 ransom scalp Scout sling Snake stockade

Sam borrows a buggy from a friend in Poplar to go into Summit. After he and Bill Driscoll kidnap Ebenezer Dorset's son, Sam takes the buggy back to his friend. When Sam comes back to the cave up on the mountain, Bill is putting plasters on some cuts on his face because Johnny hit him while they were playing. The boy now has two feathers in his hair. He is playing at being an Indian chief. Johnny loves camping. He doesn't stop talking during supper, and he wants more gravy. Sam gives it to him. Johnny

gives the name " Snake -Eye" to Sam. Early the next day the boy wants to scalp Bill with a big knife, but Sam stops him.

Sam and Bill write a ransom letter to the boy's father, Ebenezer Dorset. They are feeling desperate because Johnny Dorset is a very difficult child. Mr. Dorset sends a young messenger on a bike from Summit with his reply to Bill and Sam's letter.

While Sam is coming and going between Poplar and the cave, Bill stays with Johnny on the mountain and plays games with him.

The boy is very dangerous. He kicks Bill with his feet, bites him with his teeth, and hits him behind the ear with a rock from his sling.

While Johnny is playing the Black Scout game, he gets on Bill's back. He rides Bill many kilometers across the country on his hands and knees until they get to the stockade. This is too much for Bill and he angrily sends the boy home to his father. But Johnny comes back!



Correct the mistakes in these sentences from the *Summit Weekly News* newspaper story about the kidnap. Write the correct sentences.

1. This week Summit teacher Ebenezer Dorset lost his son to kidnappers.

This week Summit banker Ebenezer Dorset lost his son to kidnappers.

2. The kidnappers took the boy for some weeks.

The kidnappers took the boy for some days.

3. Mr. Dorset's son's name is Jimmy.

Mr. Dorset's son's name is Johnny.

4. The boy is seven years old and has blond hair.

The boy is ten years old and has red hair.

avenue a wide street

bench a chair for two or more people

bite (bit) cut with your teeth

buggy an old car, pulled by a horse

camp a place where someone lives for a short time

cave a hole in the side of a mountain

chain a long metal string; you can put a small chain on a watch

charity when rich people give money or other things to help poor people

chief the most important man in a large group of North American Indians

choose go for one thing out of many things after thinking about it

church people go here on Sunday to talk to God

cigar a big expensive cigarette

cop a man or woman in the police

curling irons hot metal things to make straight hair look soft and nice

desperate dangerous

duck a type of bird that can swim or fly

feather a long, thin part of a bird

gravy the juice from cooking meat; you put it on meat before you eat it

horse an animal with four legs; you can ride it or it can pull a buggy

kick hit with your feet

kidnap take a person from their family and ask for money before bringing them back

knee the part of the leg that moves in the middle

messenger a person who takes a message from here to there

mirror you can see your face or body in this

mountain a high place

organ you play music on this in a church

package a gift or other thing inside paper

pan you put food in this when you cook it

plaster you put this on top of a cut

ransom you give this money to kidnappers to get a missing person back

scalp cut all the hair from somebody's head

scout a person who goes in front of others to look for danger

sling you can use this to send rocks from your hand to hit people

snake a long, often dangerous, animal with no legs

stockade somewhere with a wall around it to stop any danger for the people inside

strange not usual






umbrella you hold this over your head when it rains

winter the coldest three months of the year





StandFor Readers

StandFor Readers provide a range of extensive reading materials for learners of all ages. Readers are carefully selected to cater for a range of interests, and are available across all levels. Each title is meticulously graded for both vocabulary and structure, and topics have been selected to reflect the age and ability of students. Standfor Graded Readers are graded according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). These titles respond to the need for Content and Language Integrated Learning materials.

StandFor Young Readers

	Level 1	125 Headwords	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ The Enormous Turnip▶ Little Red Hen▶ The Three Little Pigs▶ Katie's Camera
	Level 2	240 Headwords	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ The Cats and the Fishes▶ The Gingerbread Man▶ The Three Hungry Goats▶ Peach Boy
	Level 3	390 Headwords	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ The Emperor's New Clothes▶ The Little Prince▶ Little Red Riding Hood▶ The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse▶ What Is Inside the Big Red Suitcase?
	Level 4	540 Headwords	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Arachne▶ Couscous▶ Puss in Boots▶ Transportation Around the World▶ The Twelve Months
	Level 5	680 Headwords	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Dragon Boat▶ Icarus▶ Let's Go to the City▶ Nuala▶ The Stories of King Arthur

StandFor Graded Readers

	Level 1	380 Headwords	CEFR: A1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ The Adventures of Tom Sawyer▶ Festivals▶ Rip Van Winkle
	Level 2	580 Headwords	CEFR: A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Great Navigators▶ The Monkey's Paw▶ Sherlock Holmes: The Yellow Band
	Level 3	800 Headwords	CEFR: A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ The Black Cat and Other Stories▶ Oceans▶ The Ransom of Red Chief and Other Stories
	Level 4	1000 Headwords	CEFR: B1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ The Call of the Wild▶ Climate Change▶ Robinson Crusoe